

# FSAMC — FUNDAMENTALS OF SYSTEMS ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT COURSE

## *Laying the Groundwork for a Permanent Acquisition Workforce*

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**W**ould you like to experience a new and different approach to DoD education — one that offers academic challenges while retaining a relaxed atmosphere of enjoyment and entertainment? If your answer is yes, discover the Defense Acquisition University's (DAU) introduction to the acquisition professional workforce — the **FUNDamentals of Systems Acquisition Management Course**...

### Background

The Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management Course (FSAMC), ACQ 101, is an eclectic

collection of subjects from the entire acquisition process. The 9-day course includes the following: systems acquisition management, requirements generation, team building, contracting management, financial management, acquisition logistics, software management, test and evaluation, science and technology, systems engineering, systems analysis and control, manufacturing, life-cycle phases, and acquisition strategy.

Completion of the FSAMC is a requirement for career Level I certification in 7 of the 11 DAU career fields. The career fields for which the FSAMC is mandatory follow:

- Acquisition Logistics
- Business, Cost Estimating and Financial Management
- Communications-Computer Systems
- Manufacturing, Production, and Quality Assurance
- Program Management
- Systems Planning, Research, Development and Engineering
- Test and Evaluation

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This course is offered by the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC), the Army Logistics Management College (ALMC), and the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT).



Prior to August 1994, the FSAMC was a 5-day course called PMT 101 and taught by DSMC, ALMC, the Army Management Engineering College, and the Naval Warfare Assessment

Center. Since no regulatory requirement existed mandating completion, however, attendance was voluntary. Despite the lack of regulatory requirements, PMT 101 was a popular and valuable course. The present course came about as a result of a DoD initiative to institutionalize the acquisition process as well as its workforce. With the implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) of 1991 and subsequent formation of the DAU, the FSAMC chartered a new focus.

### **Popping-In and Popping-Out of the System**

Previously, the acquisition process suffered by having varied people as-

signed to critical acquisition positions on an interim basis. The DoD experienced a revolving door-type stability for both the military and civilian workforce. Military personnel were randomly assigned to acquisition positions. Civilian personnel were assigned positions based on standard Office of Personnel Management criteria. The criteria were not necessarily based on objective acquisition experience or education, but rather upon subjective determinations.

Personnel often worked 2 or 3 years in the assignment and then moved on to other jobs. This type of approach to personnel management was referred to as "popping-in and popping-out" of the system. Individuals were assigned to acquisition projects for 2 or 3 years, making decisions that sometimes caused severe and unforeseen impacts in future years of the system's development.

Since programs sometimes take 15 to 20 years to develop, the impact would not be discovered for many years. In some cases a lack of experience, knowledge, and foresight resulted in decisions that adversely affected the developing system. These decisions were not cases of intentional malice or misgivings, rather, a lack of knowledge fostering poor decisions.

### **DAWIA — A Different Approach**

Today we see a different approach to acquisition evolving — one that mandates and supports the infusion

of education into the whole acquisition process and the acquisition workforce. Constraints, downsizing, and budget cuts impact the system more than ever before. The old axiom, "if it doesn't work, we can fix it later," will not work today. The DoD cannot afford to go back and fix the problem. We must do it right the first time or not do it at all. Programs will not continue to receive congressional funding if they consistently run off course.

A permanent acquisition workforce is taking shape, laying the groundwork for an improved acquisition process. Civilians and military pursue several levels of training and education requirements associated with specific positions of responsibility. For example, the FSAMC is the foundation for the Intermediate Systems Acquisition Course (PMT 201), a requirement for program managers, program executive officers, and many acquisition staff positions. The DAWIA endeavors can only result in better products for the users — the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

### **A Humble But Necessary Beginning**

With the diverse workforce the FSAMC draws a wide variety of students from multiple backgrounds blending experience with knowledge. Group exercises and student comments supplement and reinforce lectures. The case studies illustrate real-life challenging acquisition scenarios to foster thought-provoking comments. Finally, humor is injected wherever possible to make the course enjoyable.

Fighting and survival on tomorrow's battlefield requires careful intervention, many years of training, and prior planning. An educated and dedicated workforce is needed to generate the right piece of equipment from the right manufacturer for the right price. The humble beginning on the long road of acquisition begins with the Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management Course.



Photo by Richard Mattox

*Students of DSMC's Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management Course receive instruction at the Fort Belvoir main campus. The DSMC FSAMC course director is Professor Andrea Garcia.*

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